

The Cross of Christ the Christian's Glory

⑥

Proposed A New Translation
S E R M O N

Preached at the

V I S I T A T I O N

O F

The Rev. JOHN BROWN, D. D.

ARCHDEACON of Northampton,

HELD AT

All-Saints Church in Northampton,

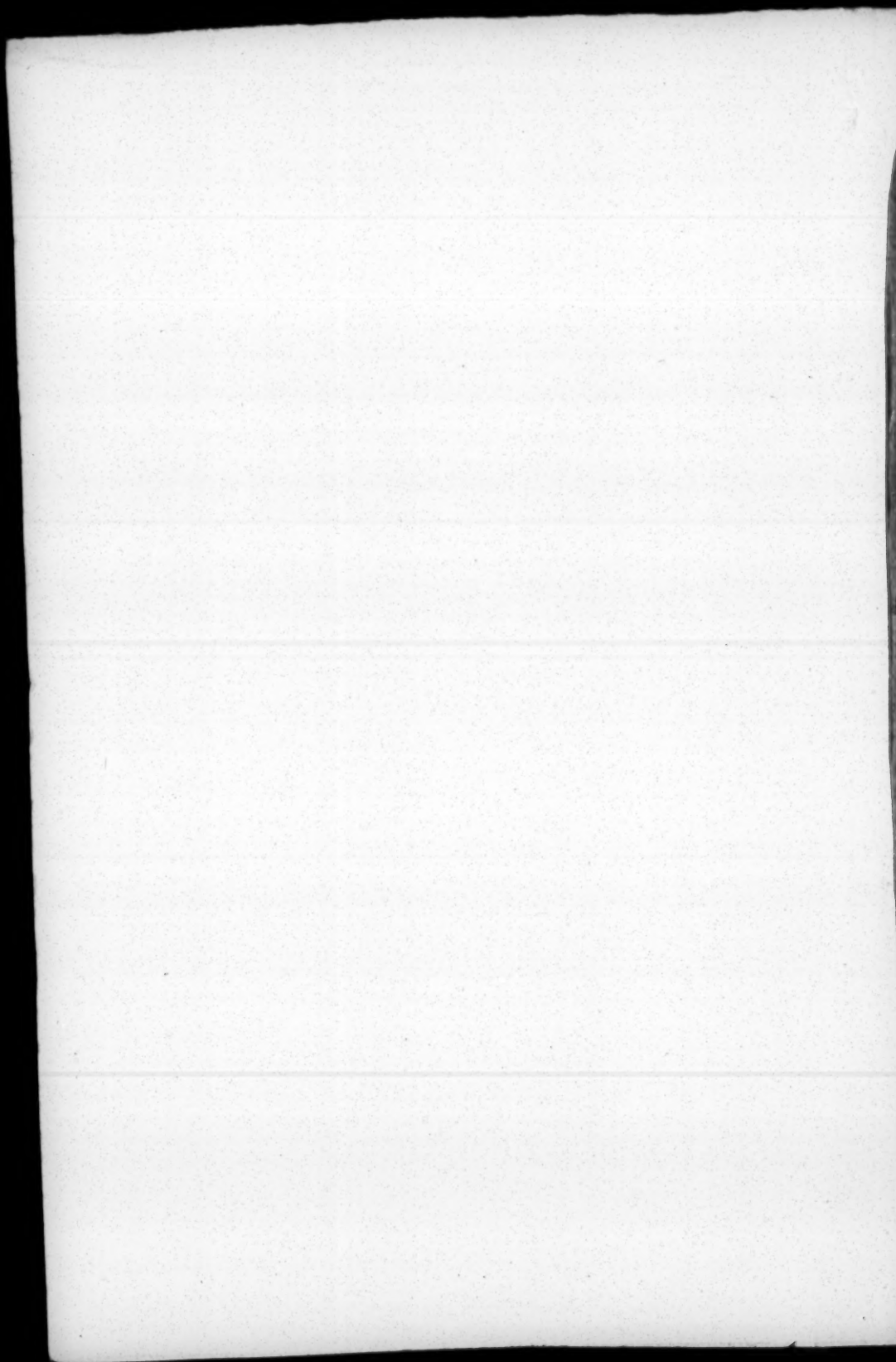
On May 10. 1753.

By JAMES HERVEY, A.M.

Rector of *Weston-Favell.*

The FOURTH EDITION.

Printed in the year MDCCCLVIII.



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GAL. vi. 14.

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE cross of Christ was the favourite topic of St Paul's contemplation:—the cross of Christ was the chosen subject of his sermons, and the grand theme of his writings.—At all times, and in every capacity, he professed, he avowed, he *gloried* in the cross of Christ:—nay, what is very remarkable, he gloried in *nothing* else:—and, what is still more observable, he *abhorred* the thought of glorying in any thing else. He speaks of such a practice in the language of detestation and dread, accounting it a high degree both of folly and of wickedness: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It may therefore be an employ worthy of our present attention, to inquire into the *nature*, the *reasonableness*, and the *wisdom* of this resolution. All which, I hope, will appear, if we consider,

1. In what the apostle would *not* glory.
2. In what he *did* glory.
3. What *reason* he had to glory in the cross of Christ.

These points being briefly dispatched, I shall beg leave to add a word of *application*, suggested by the tenor of the discourse, and adapted to the circumstances of my several hearers. And may that adorable Jesus, who has exchanged his cross for an heavenly crown, accompany all with his *divine blessing*!

Let us then inquire,

I. In what the apostle did *not* glory?—Not in the *greatness* of his *learning*, as a scholar. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; educated by the most famous tutor of the age. Nor was his genius or his industry inferior to the other advantages of his education. Yet all these advantages, with their correspondent acquisitions, he accounted no better than pompous ignorance, or refined folly.

Not in the *strictness* of his *life*, as a Jew.—In this respect he profited above his equals: *was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers (a)*; *after the strictest sect of their religion, he lived a Pharisee (b)*: was zealous, exceedingly zealous, of the whole ceremonial law, and of all the traditional constitutions. Which accomplishments must finish his character among his countrymen; must open his way to some of the first honours of the nation, and give him a name among those worthies who were reputed *the excellent of the earth*. But what others counted gain, this *he* counted loss for Christ.

Not in the *eminency* of his *gifts*, nor in the *extent* of his *usefulness*, as a Christian minister.—He had been caught up into the third heaven; had heard the words of God, and seen the vision of the Almighty; had wrought all manner of wonders, and signs, and mighty deeds.—What was still more valuable, he had planted churches, and converted souls. His labours were gone out into all lands, and his words into the ends of the earth.—Yet all these acquirements, before the infinite God, were *defective*; all these performances, in point of justification, were *insufficient*. Therefore in *none* of these he gloried.—Which reminds me of the second inquiry,

II. In what the apostle *did* glory?—He gloried in a cross. Strange! What so *scandalous* as a cross? On a

(a) Acts xxii. 3.

(b) Acts xxvi. 5.

cross rebellious slaves were executed. The cross was *execrable* among men, and *accursed* even by God (c). Yet the apostle glories in the cross.—Crucifixion not being used among us, the expression does not sound so *barb*; neither is the idea so *horrid*. But to the ear of a Galatian it conveyed much the same meaning, as if the apostle had gloried in a halter, gloried in the gallows, gloried in a gibbet *.

“ Stupid creature ! (perhaps some may reply), to “ undervalue the most substantial endowments, and “ glory in infamy itself ! ” — But stop a moment, and hear the apostle further. He glories in the cross of Christ ; that illustrious person who was *anointed* to be the all-instructing prophet, the all-atoning priest, and the all-conquering king of the church. — In the cross of Christ Jesus, who, by the discharge of all those important offices, should *save* his people from the dominion of sin, and from the damnation of hell. — In the cross of Christ Jesus, our Lord ; and not ours only, but Lord of all ; who *doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth* (d) ; *who hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS* (e).

(c) Gal. iii. 13. (d) Dan. iv. 35. (e) Rev. xix. 16.

* Some persons, I am informed, were disgusted at these words, *halter, gallows, gibbet* ; they are so horridly contemptible ! — To whom I would reply, That the cross, in point of ignominy and torment, included *all this, and more*. Unless the English reader forms to himself some such image, he will never be able to apprehend the scandalous nature and shocking circumstances of his divine Master's death.

The words, I must confess, were *diversified*, and the sentiment was *reiterated*, on purpose to affect the mind with this astonishing truth. Neither can I prevail upon myself to expunge the expressions, unless I could substitute others of a more ignominious and execrable import : only I would beg of the serious reader to spend a moment in the following reflection. — “ Is it so, that a *polite and delicate* ear can hardly endure so much as the *sound* of the words ? How “ amazing then was the condescension ! how charming and adorable the goodness of God's *illustrious Son*, to bear all that is signified by these intolerably vile terms ! bear it *willingly*, bear it *cheerfully*, for us men, and our salvation ! ”

And

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And is it possible for any human heart to contemplate the cross of so *divine* a being, and not to glory? Is it possible to say, *Angels, he rules over you; but he died, he died on a cross for me*; and not exult in such transporting beneficence?—This will be more evident, if we examine,

III. What *reason* the apostle had to glory in the cross of Christ.—The cross, though in itself an ignominious tree, yet being the cross of Christ, is infinitely ennobled. It becomes the *tree of life*; it bears the divinest fruit. Its clusters are all *spiritual* and *heavenly* blessings. Two or three of those clusters you will permit me to select; and may the God of all mercy make them better than a feast to every humble soul!

One blessing is the *pardon of sin*; the pardon of *all* sin, original and actual; sin that is remembered, and sin that is forgotten; sin, however circumstanced, or however aggravated. The pardon of all was purchased by the death of Christ,—completely purchased;—so that against the true believer sin shall never rise up in judgment; *shall not so much as be mentioned unto him (f)*; shall be done away, as though it had never been. For thus saith the ambassador of the Prince of Peace, *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things (g)*.—Oh my soul! my guilty soul! what are all the kingdoms of the world, and the glories of them, compared with this ineffable blessing! Yet this is but one among a multitude.

Another benefit accruing from the cross of Christ, is *reconciliation with God*.—*When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son (h)*. Not pardoned only, but accepted; from a state of *enmity*, restored to a state of *favour*, even that *favour which is better than life (i)*.—A privilege of such superlative ex-

(f) Ezek. xviii. 22.

(h) Rom. v. 10.

(g) Acts xiii. 38. 39.

(i) Psalm lxiii. 3.

cellency, that it was celebrated in the hymns of angels. When the heavenly host uttered a song, *this* was the subject of their harmonious joy: *Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men (k).* "By the birth of this wonderful child, and the death he shall sustain, peace is made between heaven and earth; and not *peace* only, but a divine *friendship* * commences. God regards the poor apostate race of men, not only without indignation, but with complacency and delight." *He rejoices over them to do them good (l).*

Another benefit is *holiness*; or, if you please, the true, the Christian morality.—Let none think the believer in Jesus disparages *true morality*. True morality is the image of the blessed God. It is most charmingly delineated throughout the whole Bible. It is the beginning of heaven in the human soul; and its proper origin is from the cross of our divine Master.—For through the merits of his death sinners are made partakers of the *holy Spirit*; who writes upon their hearts, and makes legible in their conversation, what was anciently written upon the mitre of the high priest, HOLINESS TO THE LORD.—And oh! what a *motive* is the cross of Christ to the exercise of every virtue! *He died; my LORD, my JUDGE, my KING died, to redeem me from all iniquity, and make me zealous of good works.* How powerfully, far

(k) Luke ii. 14.

(l) Deut. xxviii. 63.

* There seems to be a beautiful *gradation* in this angelic hymn. *Good-will* is more expressive, and denotes a richer blessing, than *peace*.—The original *eudoxia* is a word of the most amiable and noble meaning. It signifies a very *high esteem*, and a very *tender benevolence*. By a word of the same import, the almighty Father expresses his infinite satisfaction in the person and undertaking of his beloved Son, Matth. iii. 17.

Would my reader have the liveliest paraphrase on this passage? or see the actions of this divine complacency described with inimitable delicacy? let him attend to the prophet Zephaniah: *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.* Chap. iii. 17.

beyond

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beyond any *naked instructions*, or *abstract reasonings*, do such considerations invite us—urge us—constrain us (*m*), to *renounce* all ungodliness, and *adorn* the gospel of God our Saviour!

Another blessing is, *victory over death*.—This also is the fruit of that once detested, but now ever beloved tree. For thus it is written, *That through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (n)*. The devil is said to have the power of death; because, by tempting, too successfully, our first parents, he *brought* death into the world; because, by tempting their posterity to sin, and too often prevailing, he *arrays* death in horror; he *arms* death with its sting. But Christ, by expiating our guilt, has disarmed this last enemy; has taken away its sting; and made it not loss, but *gain to die (o)*.—The *gay* and the *healthy* know not how to form an estimate of this deliverance. Nor can any words of mine describe it with proper energy. Go to *dying beds*; *there* you will learn its true worth. Ask some *agonizing* friend; he, and he alone, can tell you, what a blessing it is to have the king of terrors converted into a messenger of peace.

One blessing more I would mention, and earnestly wish it in due time to all my hearers, *an entrance into heaven*. This too is the produce of our Redeemer's cross.—St John saw a bright assembly of happy beings, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, rejoicing before the throne of God. *These*, said one of the venerable elders, *are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*. THEREFORE *are they before*

(*m*) 2 Cor. v. 14.

(*n*) Heb. ii. 14. 15.

Religion! thou the soul of happiness;

And, groaning Calvary, of thee! *There* shine

The noblest truths; *there* strongest motives sting!

There sacred violence assaults the soul;

There nothing but *compulsion* is forborn.

(*o*) Phil. i. 21.

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the throne (p). They came out of great tribulation. They suffered, it is probable, in the service of Christ. Perhaps they laid down their lives for his sake. But *this* was not their passport into the regions of bliss.—*They washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.* They had applied to their own souls the merits and atonement of the crucified Jesus. By *this* means they were presented without spot, and blameless. On *this* account, they were admitted to “see the King of heaven in his beauty” (*q*), and to be ever, ever, with the Lord.

Since then the cross of Christ was *demonstrative* of such stupendous *love*; since it is *productive* of *benefits* innumerable, invaluable, and eternal; was there not a *cause* for the apostle to glory on this behalf?—Nay, might not the very stones have cried out, to reproach him with *insensibility* and *ingratitude*, if he had neglected to glory in the cross of Christ?—And since this love was shewed, these benefits were procured, not for *him* only, but for *us*, and for all generations; does not this afford me an opportunity of *applying* the doctrine to each particular hearer?

1. Let me address, or rather let me congratulate my *brethren in the ministry*.—Though you cannot control the laws of nature; though you cannot see into the secrets of futurity; you have the same cause of glorying with the very chiefest of the apostles; a cause of glorying, which that holy man of God esteemed far above all such miraculous abilities. You have the cross of Christ,

For your *study* as men;

For your *hope* as *Christians*;

For your *preaching* as *ministers*.

For your *study* as *men*. Here the *reasoning* faculties may exert themselves, with everlasting improvement, and everlasting delight.—Here we contemplate the wonders, the unparallelled wonders of a God made *man*; dying as a pattern of patience, as a martyr for

truth, as an all-perfect sacrifice for sin. — Here the Lord Jehovah hath fully granted what his servant Moses so earnestly requested (r) : He hath made *all his glory* to pass before the astonished eyes of angels and of men. — Here *justice* has set her most awful terrors in array ; even while *goodness* appears, with inexpressible loveliness, and the most attractive beauty. Here *truth*, more unshaken than a rock, takes her immoveable stand ; and *mercy*, tenderer than the mother's tear, yearns with bowels of everlasting pity. — In a word, the cross of Christ is a conspicuous theatre, on which *all* the divine perfections unite, and harmonize, and shine forth with transcendent lustre.

As *Christians*, we have, in the cross of Christ, the *richest provision* for our own spiritual wants. This is a foundation of the sublimest *hope*, and a fountain of the most exuberant *joy*. This affords matter for the deepest *humility*, and yields fuel for the most flaming *love*. Faith in our crucified Jesus, is an ever-active principle of the most chearful and exact *obedience* ; is an ample and inexhaustible magazine, from which we may fetch arms to conquer, absolutely conquer, the allurements of the world, the solicitations of the flesh, and the temptations of the devil. — By this a way is opened for us into *the holy of holies* ; and what may we not venture to ask, what may we not expect to receive, who have the blood of the everlasting covenant to plead, in all our approaches to the throne of grace ? — Having, therefore, *such* an High Priest, having in his cross *unsearchable* riches, who shall make our glorying void ? what shall hinder us from rejoicing, and saying, “ Blessed be God for these
“ opening beauties of spring ! blessed be God for the ex-
“ pected fruits of autumn ! blessed be God for ten thou-
“ sand thousand gifts of his indulgent providence ! but,
“ *above all*, blessed be God for the cross of Christ ! ”

As *ministers* of the gospel, we are not left to set before our hearers a system of *refined Heathenism*, or to entertain them with *cold, spiritless* lectures of virtue. No ;

(r) Exod. xxxiii. 18.

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we have the *infinitely tender* love, the *immensely free* grace, of the bleeding dying Immanuel, to display—to improve—to enforce. And is there a topic in the whole compass of *oratory*, is there an argument amidst all the stores of *reason*, so admirably calculated to touch the *finest movements* of the soul? to strike ail the *inmost springs* of action, with the most persuasive, the most commanding energy?—Would we alarm the *supine*, or intimidate the *presumptuous*? we may call them to behold God's own Son weltering in blood, God's own Son transfix'd with the arrows of justice. We may bid them consider, if judgment begins with the immaculate Mediator, where shall the irreclaimable sinner appear? how will he *escape* the stroke, how *bear* the weight of God's everlasting vengeance?—Would we comfort the *distressed*? we may point them to an atonement, whose merits are infinite, and able to save to the *very uttermost* (s). We may lead them to a righteousness, whose efficacy is unbounded, and sufficient to justify *the ungodly*. And what *balm* can be so sovereign for a wounded conscience?—Are we to support the *weak*, and animate the *doubting*? here we may shew them promises, free promises*, exceeding great and precious promises, ratified by the oath of Jehovah, and sealed by the blood of his Son. And what *cordials* can be so restorative to the drooping Christian?

In short, the doctrine of the cross is suited to answer all the *great ends* of our ministry, and promote all the truly *valuable interests* of our people. By this the Holy Spirit delights to work. And this, O Satan, *shall be thy plague*; this, O sin, *shall be thy destruction* (t) — However, therefore, the cross might be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, God forbid that *we* should glory in any thing else!—Let

(s) Heb. vii. 25.

(t) Hos. xiii. 14.

* To man the bleeding cross has promis'd all:

The bleeding cross has sworn eternal grace:

Who gave his life, what grace will he deny?

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this be the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the beginning and ending of all our *public* ministrations *.—Let us leave a favour of this knowledge, which is far better than precious ointment, in every *private* company.—Let it appear, from *all* our conversation, that the *affections* of our heart, and the *labours* of our life, are devoted, wholly devoted, to our adored Redeemer's cross.—*Happy* the *people* who are under the care of such ministers! and *blessed* the *ministers* who walk according to this rule!

2. Let me exhort all *true believers*; those who are *wile* in their own eyes, and to whom Christ alone is *precious*.—Remember, brethren, what is written in the prophet: it is a description of your state; it is a direction for your conduct: *In the Lord*, the Lord Jesus Christ, *shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and in him shall they glory* (u).

Let none say, that religion is a *gloomy* or *uncomfortable* state: I call upon you this day to *rejoice* †.—Let none say, that religion is a *mean* or *despicable* thing: I call upon you this day to *glory*; and have the *divine* authority for both ‡.—You will dishonour the blessed Jesus, you will disparage his surpassing excellency, if you do not *confide* in him, and make your *boast* of him.

(u) *Is.* xlv. 25.

* The author who could write the *spirited* and *weighty* lines which follow, must doubtless have this conviction *deep* on his heart.

— Thou, my *all*!

My theme! my inspiration! and my crown!

My strength in age! my rise in low estate!

My soul's ambition, pleasure, wealth!—my world!

My light in darkness! and my life in death!

My boast through time! bliss through eternity!

My *sacrifice*! my *God*!—What things are these!

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† 'Tis this makes *Christian triumph* a command:

'Tis this makes joy a *duty* to the wise.

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‡ *Καυχασθαι*, the word in our text, denotes the act of *rejoicing*, as well as of *glorying*. Thus it is translated, *Rom. v. 11*. And indeed this it always implies.— See *Psal. v. 11*. *Psal. cxlix. 5*. *Sept. Transl.*

Christ

Christ is King of heaven; Christ is Judge of the world; Christ is God over all. And of *such* a Saviour shall we not glory? Yes, verily; and in all circumstances, and on every occasion.

Amidst your manifold *infirmities*, glory in Christ. For though he was crucified in weakness, he hath all power in heaven and earth. And it is written before him, it is one of his immutable decrees, *Sin shall not have dominion over you (x)*.—Amidst your various *failings*, glory in Christ. For his righteousness covers all your imperfections; his righteousness secures you from wrath and condemnation; and, though deficient in yourselves, you are complete in him (*y*).—Under the pressure of *tribulations*, lift up your heads, and glory in the cross; because the Captain of your salvation was made perfect through sufferings. If you suffer with him, you shall also reign with him. And the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the happiness which Christ hath purchased with his agonies, and will quickly bestow on his people.—When *death* approaches, death that cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible among the kings of the earth, do you still glory in the cross. Adhering to this banner, you may boldly and triumphantly say, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory**?—When that great, *tremendous day* shall come, which puts an end to time and terrestrial things; when that awful, that *majestic voice*, is heard, which commands all the race of Adam

(*x*) Rom. vi. 14.

(*y*) Col. ii. 10.

* 1 Cor. xv. 55. This is evidently the language of a conqueror, addressed to some formidable, but vanquished enemy.—We shall form no improper idea of this significant and beautiful passage, if we picture to ourselves the good apostle, in the attitude of those Hebrew captains who set their feet on the necks of the five Canaanitish kings, Josh. x. 24. If we suppose him, in such a posture, to utter this animated exclamation, or rather this *pious insult*, over the two grand, but prostrate adversaries of mankind, "*O death! where is now thy sting? since Christ has expiated sin, by the sacrifice of himself? O grave! where is now thy victory? since Christ is both risen himself, and has ascertained to his people a joyful resurrection?*"

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to appear at the bar; *then*, my dear brethren in Christ, *then* also shall you glory in the cross. When others, in an agony of terror, call upon rocks to fall on them, and mountains to overwhelm them; *this* shall be your sedate appeal; rather, *this* shall be your heroic challenge, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died* (2).—Then shall you enter the harbour of eternal rest; not like a shipwrecked mariner, cleaving to some broken plank, and hardly escaping the raging waves; but like some stately vessel, with all her sails expanded, and riding before a prosperous gale*.

3. Let me caution the *self-righteous*; those who more frequently think of *their own* piety than of Christ's *obedience*; are more apt to cry out, with the Pharisee, *I am no extortioner, no adulterer*, than to confess, with the Publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner*.—What shall I say to these persons? Let me not be thought *ensorious*, when my only aim is to be *faithful*. Beware, I beseech you beware, lest you build for eternity, not on a *rock*, but on the *sand*. However you may appear in *your own* sight, before the *adorable* Majesty of the everlasting God, before the *consummate* perfection of his holy law, you are less than nothing, you are worse than nothing. You are, indeed you are, deficiency and sin. Renounce, therefore, renounce all dependence on self. Trust no longer in a refuge of lies; lest all your admired attainments, at the day of final retribution, be like *straw*, and *hay*, and *stubble*, in Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace.—Imitate the blessed penman of my text. Are you blameless in your external carriage? So was he. Are you exemplary in many points? So was he. Yet

(2) Rom. viii. 33. 34.

* St Peter's expression, *Εισοδος πλασιως επιχορηγησεται*, is perhaps too nervous, and too noble, to admit of an *adequate* translation. The above comparison is, I think, a very pertinent illustration of the delicate sentiment, and the delightful doctrine. A ship wafted into the port, under the full influence of wind and tide, seems to afford the finest representation of a *large*, a *rich*, an *abundant* entrance.
2 Pet. i. 11.

all this righteousness he *accounted but dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord* (a)—Be this your pattern. Write *emptiness* upon your own duties; *emptiness* upon your own works; and you shall be filled with all the *fulness* of God your Saviour. Every other cause of glorying will be like the morning-cloud, or the early dew, which *passeth away* (b). But this cause of glorying will *stand fast for evermore as the moon, and as the faithful witness in heaven* (c).

Can I conclude without adding a word of admonition to the *wicked*? those, I mean, who are enemies to the cross of Christ, who mind earthly things, but neither hunger nor thirst after righteousness.—My soul remembers the wormwood and the gall of such a state, and cannot but tenderly pity these unhappy people.—Alas! my friends, what have *you* to glory in? The devil and his angels expect, ere long, to glory in your destruction. Those malignant fiends are eying you as their prey, and are impatient to begin your torment. Great, inexpressibly great is your danger. The Lord almighty open your eyes to discern it!—Nevertheless, your case is not desperate. You may *yet be delivered*, “as a bird out of “the snare of the fowler.” Look unto the crucified Jesus. *Why* does he hang on that bloody tree? *why* are his hands pierced with iron? *why* is his body racked with pain? *why* his heart torn with anguish? It is for *you*, sinners, for *you*. That blood is poured out to cleanse *you* from guilt; those wounds are sustained to heal *your* consciences; that anguish is endured to obtain rest for *your* souls.—In that mangled body *dwells all the fulness of the Godhead* (d). Great, beyond imagination great, is the merit of those sufferings. Why then, O! why will you die? why will you perish for ever, who have an *all-sufficient* propitiation in the cross of Christ? Fly to this sanctuary; fly before it be too late; fly without a moment's delay. It is an *invincible* sanctuary. None

(a) Phil. iii. 8. (b) Hos. vi. 4. (c) Psal. lxxxix. 36.
(d) Col. ii. 9.

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ever perished, that fled by faith to the compassionate, the *divinely compassionate* Redeemer.—His death shall be a full satisfaction for your iniquities. A sense of his immensely rich goodness shall *win* your affections; shall incline (what all the threatenings of damnation could never effect), shall incline you, to *loath* your sins, and to *love* his service; shall smooth your path, and expedite your progress, to the regions of immortal honour and joy.

Having now, with great plainness of speech, addressed my brethren in the *ministry*, having exhorted *believers*, cautioned the *self-righteous*, and warned the *wicked*, let me commend the whole to your *serious recollection*, and to God's *gracious benediction*.—And, “O Lord most holy! O God most mighty! O holy and merciful Saviour! by thine agony and bloody sweat—by thy *“cross and passion”*—let not the word now spoken be in vain in the Lord! *Amen, and Amen.*

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